

# Little White Lies TRUTH & MOVIES

[review](#)

## Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows

Review by [Adam Woodward @AWLies](#)



**One of the most radical female artists of the 20th century finally gets her dues in this lively docu-profile.**

Directed by

[Richard Kovitch](#)

Starring [Jack Bond](#) [Penny Slinger](#) [Peter Whitehead](#)

## **Anticipation.**

Always game for a little cultural enlightenment.

## **Enjoyment.**

Not as bold as its subject, but an essential introduction to a great artist.

## **In Retrospect.**

Slinger's work and worldview feels more relevant than ever.

If you've ever been made to feel like a knuckle-dragging neophyte by a documentary asserting the considerable and incontrovertible cultural significance of a pioneering subject you've never even heard of, don't be put off by [Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows](#). This *is* one of those films, but there's a good reason why the incendiary artist in question has slipped into obscurity over the past 30 years or so.

Raised at the height of postwar austerity and reaching maturity amid the counterculture explosion of the 1960s, Slinger became something of an avant-garde It girl during the proceeding decade. Primarily working in collage, photography and sculpture, she created radically political, invariably provocative pieces that combined elements of erotica and surrealism, culminating in her career-defining 1977 work, 'An Exorcism', a psychosexual 'photo-romance' that evolved over the course of seven years.

Of course, this was a time when the male gaze was being challenged and received ideas of femininity questioned like never before. A time when (some) women were enjoying newfound freedom and means of self-expression. When art, fashion and sex were becoming mainstream. Slinger was at the vanguard of this movement, so why is she not more well-known today? Interestingly, while the historical airbrushing of female artists should not be overlooked here, Slinger cites her decision to withdraw from public view (she moved to the Caribbean in the 1980s before settling in rural California, where she lived and worked as recently as 2017) as a key factor.

Director Richard Kovitch makes a strong case for Slinger being the most overlooked British artist of the 20th century, yet you get the sense that she does not regret turning her back on the art world. As several talking heads note, it's not simply the case that Slinger was ahead of her time but that, as a product of her era, the singular style and progressive themes of her work did not always resonate with those outside of her peer group. It's only now that the female body and gender identity are once again at the forefront of cultural discourse that Slinger is finally receiving the wider recognition she deserves.

*Penny Slinger: Out of the Shadows* is released 28 June. To find out where the film is screening near you visit [anti-worldsreleasing.co.uk](http://anti-worldsreleasing.co.uk)

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